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CHRISTMAS NUMBER



SANTA CLAUS AT GRIMM'S RANCH.

A Story for Christmas.



for two gold pieces of \$20?"

John Wells jerked the Menardville road extricated itself from

the scattered jacais of Fort McKavett and Wells had freshly risen from an unappetig-ing and indigestible breakfast of greate-sod-den tortillas and rancid basen; had quarceled with the hotel keeper over his extor-tionate charges for the last night's lodging; was hungry, angry with the sharp sleet that came drifting against his face from the northeast; angry with the "infernal nick" that doomed him to wander over the wild back over the dim trail, in monentary a necessarily of northeast; angry with the "infernal nick" that doomed him to wander over the wild back over the dim trail, in monentary a necessarily of northeast. prairies of southwestern Texas while the rest of mankind were happily preparing for the holiday restivities; angry at the abominable cabbage-leaf eigar which refused to yield him solace from his woos; angry with the world at large and just at that momen -with the disreputable looking tireaser before him in particular.

"Two gold pieces of \$20," he growled.
"Two gold pieces of \$20," he growled.
"Where are they? Are they counterfeit?
How did you come by them?"
The Mexican gravely held them forth in

his dirty palm for inspection.
"They are gold, senor. They were given rne by the American, Senor Black-who sends the meat of goats across the seas in cans. The money is the price of 40 goats that I drove from the Rio Concho."

Wells regarded the Mexican with a search-

T know Col. Bill Black, and his gold is were in the hotel just now when I paid my bill, and I think I saw you last night at the store where I bought those cursed cigars. I believe you want to learn if I have n so you can relieve me of it farther out on the

The object of Wells' distrust threw his arms aloft in humble deprecation. "The Sacred Mother knows-!"

"Never mind that nonsense," exclaimed Wells, roughly, "I'm no baby, and I'll take



"THEY ARE GOLD, SENOR,"

chances on you and all the Greasers in Me Kavett. I'll give you sliver for your gold; and here in this sack is more money-white and yellow-that you may have for the tak-ing. Don't be afraid of the guns-they are never loaded-but sail in as soon as you can

raise your crowd and overtake me."

The Mexican made no reply to this bland gray brows, as they rested upon the plump

He was profuse in his thanks for the Amer-ican's kindness, but Wells' only response was a short grunt as he once more drew the

biankets closely around him and chirruped to his not over-willing team.

It was a long drive to Menardville, and a longer one to the nearest railway station, the point for which Wells was now heading. THOUSAND pardons, but could the senor the change give for two could the senor the change give for two could be senored fo merchants; and he was more than anxious to get back to civilization once more. He had been successful in his mission and had his new i y urged remitted several large sums by express; but horses to a standstill his collections had been heavy during the his collections had been heavy during the and glared his annoy ance at the heavily be a r d e d Mexican who, with doffed sombrero, had soudden in the buckskin bag at his feet. It was a large sum of money and he naturally felt the responsibility its possession involved. John Wells was by no means a coward, but he was perfectly acquainted seth the responsibility. he was perfectly acquainted with the country and its people, and knew that the chance headed out for the open prairie. It was carry morning of the 24th of December, 1805. Wells had freshly risen from an imappetiz.

Wells had freshly risen from an imappetiz. larly struck with the villamous face and sus-picious demisurer of the goat herder, and the

> Without insking his usual mounday hall pectation of finding himself pursued. However, evening came without anything out bleak plains he drew rein before the do iminary of applying for accommodations, began divesting his tired horses of the bar-

he morning bring over him during the co

As he unhooked the tugs of the off horse a towheaded urchin of eight or nine years same strolling up from the near-by corral, crept-into the buggy seat and drew the biankets over his head until only his boyish face and sparkling eyes were visible.

"What's your name, mister?" he asked, with childlike directorss.

Jack Wells. What's yours? "Hank Grimm. I'm only Little Hank Old Hank is my gran'paw, and he owns this ranch. The Mexicans call this 'Dos Botas 'cause gran'paw gives the 'two

boot' brand. Say, mister, do you know who I thought you mought be when you driv' 'Couldn't guess." "I thought methy it was Santa Claus, but then I allow he's got more whiskers'n you

ave. Still, he mought have shaved." Wells admitted that Santa Claus might, by way of a change, conclude to make his annual trip with a beard of three weeks growth, or even a smoothly-shaven face Further than that he couldn't, under the circumstances, blame faittle Hank for lookcircumstances, blame tattle Hana for look-ing upon all strangers with an eye of sus-picion; but he thought the chances of pop-ping his gaze or Santa Claus by daylight were extremely small. Several millions of boys, in different parts of the world, had on keeping their eyes open for years with out avail, and there had come to be a popular belief that the joily fellow with the rem

doers traveled principally in the dark.
"That's the way be bit this ranch last
Christmas, and I reckon be left it till about the last ranch on his rounds," remarked the boy. "He didn't leave me a thing that I wanted-nuthin' but a little tin wagon and a pound of candy. Say, mister, d'ye reckon Santa Claus ever handles windchesters?

The appearance of the elder Hank Grimm pared Wells the necessity of answering spared his difficult query. The owner of the "Tw Boot ranch" was a man well advanced in years, and possessed of a sturdy, erect fig-ure, square-cut features and sky-blue eyes, that told at once of German ancestry and of past service in the armies of the old world or the new. He welcomed the traveler heartlly, directed him how to dispose of his horses for the night, and then abruptly turned away and entered the house. Little Hank remained behind and, in his quaint, hoyish way, superintended Wella' every

A covey of quail that had been foreging in the vicinity of the crib flushed at their sp-proach and settled in the prairie grass a short distance away. Little Hank clamored to have one of them killed for his Christma breakfast, and to please him, on their re-

"That's better'n you could do with a udchester," he remarked, in a tone denoting that he considered this the height of possible praise. "Gran'paw says a shotgun possible peaks: "Gran'pow says a shotgun is no good; but I reckon it depends a besp on who shoots it. I payer seed but one before, and it wen't with shocks. It he longed to a man from Arkanoovs, and be couldn't hit the broadside of a mule,"

The traveler's effects were soon transfarred to the living roun of the ranch, where he was introduced to the ranchman's aged wife, and hund that the only occupants of wife, and hund that the only occupants of the place were themselves and their pre-cedious grandson. Grimin was a German of the old school, with true Tentonic ideas of confirt, and it seemed that unusual prep-arations for the evening meal laid been made in honor of his visitors. All in the way of food that the ranch could affer was on the table, and, surmounting the array of enowy-biscounts, ham and eags, more steak and biscuits, ham and eggs, juicy steak and canned fruit, stood a group of ancient glass decenters, their contents shining in a grada-

Little Hank seemed to look upon his share of the feast as an especial treat, and after it was disposed of his tongue ran more glibly than ever. At length his grandsire suspended for a moment a morsel of beef half raised

to his mouth, and attered a word of reproof "Henry, my boy, it is not right that the children should talk and the grown ones listen. Remember, you should be very good

to night. They say that Santa Claus to bad boys is not kind."
"But see," retorted the iad, quickly. "I was good before and what did he bring me? Nothing. I wanted a windchester and he brought me a tin wagon."
"The child would be a man before his

time," put in his grandmother. "He talks of nothing but guns; and if he had them he would kill us all, and himself in the bar-

gain."
"I would be a brave soldier—like my fa ther," said the boy, his eyes filling with

"And he killed by the Indians, as was he," responded the old ranchman. "My child, the Grimms have been soldiers since the earliest days. I have fought, in my time, with brave men to lead me on to battle, and I tell you there is nothing in soldiering—nothing but hard work and slavery and bloodshed and death. It is a dog's life; nothing more." Later in the night, when Wells and Little

Hank were snugly stowed away in the lat-ter's bed, the question of Santa Claus and the "windchester" came up again, but no lengthy discussion followed.

It must have been sometime after mid-night when Wells was partially aroused by the knowledge that some one was moving inthe room, and called out to know who it

"Nobody but me—Hank Grimm. Not gran'paw, but the little one. You know—" But that was quite enough for the som-nolent gentleman from San Antonio. If the sentence was finished he failed to hear its conclusion. Sometime afterwards, however. he was aroused again; and this time so thor-

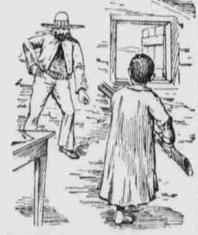
apartment opened, and were uitered at the top of Listle Hank's childish treble.

"Ther now, Santa Claus. I've got you this time, and either that windchester comes of I downs your meat-house. No tim wagons for me this Christmas."

There was a feroe curse grittingly muttered; the share crack of a pistal, and then the share crack of a pistal, and then the share crack of a pistal, and then

tered; the sharp crack of a pistol; and then
-boom! boom; -two thunderous reports
almost as one, shaking the adobe walls of
ehope. It seemed a pity that he never the ranch to their foundations. volume of smoke rolled into the sleeping room, but Wells charged through it with ready rifle, reaching the outer apartment just as old Grimm entered from another Little Hank lay beneath the huge table.

groaning dismally and rubbing his shoulder. Otherwise the room was unoccupied; but a window near the door was open, and on the



"I'VE GOT YOU THIS TIME, SANTA CLAUS."

hard dirt floor lay a freshly discharged piatol and a Mexican sombrero.

"It is robbers that have been here," ex-

claimed the ranchman. "It is Mexican robbers, and they have shot my boy!"

Wells dived beneath the table, brought

Wells dived beneath the table, brought forth the injured lad and placed him tenderly in a chair; but he at once struggled to his feet. "Turn loose the dog, gran paw, or he will git away. It's Santa Claus, and I'm blamed if he didn't miss me with his pistol right slap in my face. I never knowed afore that Santa Claus was an Arkansaw man." Wells turned from the excited boy and approached the open window. Below it, and

directly to the right, the whitewashed walls were torn and disfigured with shot, and there were great splotches and dark, trick-ling streams of something like red paint shining in the light of the lamp.

He turned to the old German; his fea-

tures pale but collected. "You will not need the dog," said he. "The man who tumbled through that win dow is lying where he fell—and I think I will recognize him when I see him."

Wells was right in both his surmises. In "layin' fer Santa Claus" Little Hank had taken a step that no midnight marauder could have foreseen. In forcing an entry to Grimm's ranch, the Mexican goat-herder, who had trailed Wells all the way from Mc-Kavett, had gone directly to his death. He thing I knew Mr. Spilkins was telling Ethel

turn to the buggy, Wells slipped a couple of bird loads in his Parker, and, when the covey rose again, grassed three plump beauties with a hasty double shot. The boy was in perfect ecstusies over his success. gered back, covering his eyes with trembling hands.

"I don't want to be a soldier," he solded.
"I never want to kill another man as long as But his sturdy old granddam-descended,

no doubt, from a long line of warfile Teutons-took him in her strong arms con-

But this man was a robber, my dear Killing was his sloserts, for he came to mur-der us all in our sleep. You saved our lives, and now would you turn coward and make us ashamed?

"It was not a brave deed," growled old Grimm. "The hoy thought to shoot Santa Claus and killed a lazy thort of a Mexican in stead. It was a buil's eye on the wrong target and no honor is won. Still, I am glad it has happened, for it may frighten his babyish mind from this folly about soldier-

And so Kris Kringle did not visit the ranch that night, and Little Hank had to wait for his rifle—but not, as it chanced, so very long, after all. Arriving without farther incident at his destination, Wells first care was to visit the different gunstores of San Antonio. of San Antonio upon an errand the nature of which can be easily guessed. On New Year's Eve the McKavett stage halted at Grimm's ranch to deliver a package, and a few min-utes later the heart of the younger Hank was beating high with elation. Snugly packed in a neat box lay two guns- a tiny winchester and a light breech loading shot; gun. It was a present fit for a king, and a costlier one than Jack Well's sim purse could have stood unabled; but his employ-ers had been told how their thousands were saved and graciously donated two per cent, of the entire amount towards rewarding the principal actor in that Christmas Eve tragprincipal actor in Sharmel."

edy at the "Two Boot ranch."

8 D. BARNES.

A CHRISTMAS GOMEDY.

Rather Exciting, But All Concerned Are Expected to Recover.



mas go off at your house?" Mrs. Talknuch asked, after she had told Mrs. Spilkins exactly how much each of her own gifts had cost and what she had exchanged them for afterwards.

We hope to be fully recovered from the effeets of it in a week or two. You see, on Christmas Eve the children were so excited about the coming of Santa Claus that they couldn't get to sleep. Young Mr. Fizzleton stayed pretty late, too, at least it seemed so to Mr. Spilkins and myself, though Ethel didn't agree with us. After he left, we found that Harry's breathing was still too regular he was aroused again; and this time so that oughly that he leard and understood the words that awake him. They evidently came from the "living room" into which his apartment opened, and were uttered at the get up and investigate the smell of gas in the

It seemed a rety that he chooses to wake at the regular hour for getting up, but I said nothing-at least very lit tle. Ethel wasn't sleepy and wanted to hang them, but her father said she'd be thinking of young Fizzleton and forget to notice whether the children were asleep or not. Why, she makes enough noise after he leaves at night to wake the dead!"

Yes, the worst thing about Love's young dream is the fact that it forgets that other

people need sleep!"
"M'hm. Well, I knew I'd have to hang those stockings, so when it was time I crept down to get them. We had left them on the dining table, but they were gone!" 'Mercy, burglars!"

"I knew that and flew upstairs. As I reached the head of the stairs, I heard some one creeping along the hall. In a second I was in the bedroom, with the door locked, but Mr. Spilkins wasn't there!

"Gracious, had they..."
"Then came the most awful groans from
the yard below and I knew that they had killed him and thrown him out of the window! I remembered then that I had bor-rowed his best necktie, the day before, with out remembering to ask his consent, and now I was a lone widow, who could never ask forgiveness for the ink I had spilled or I flew to the window, calling: 'Police!



WHEN HE HEARD WIFEY CALL FOR THE POLICE.

Murder!' Then, I heard some one trying my "The burglars, of course. Oh, you poor

'Yes, and then came awful screams from Ethel, her voice sounding as it does when her little brother brings a mouse into the room. Seizing my umbrella, I went to her roscue. In the hall I ran into the arms of

to burn the ostrich features on my new bonnet and see if that would not bring me

Spilkins was murdered and—"
"Well, he wasn't. He had gotten the stockings and nung them, when he heard me call for the police and..."But the groans and Ethel's screams?"

"The grouning noise was young Mr. Fiz-zieton, singing a serenade of Christinas lyams under her window. She alopt through that, being roused by her father cattling at my door, and thinking I was murdered?" "Gracous! I imper that was the end of it?" "It was!". The roller carrie and series

"Gracoust' I hope that was the end of it?"

"It wasn't. The poince came and seeing young Fixeleton in the yard, they brought him in to be identified as the burglar? It took half an hour to induce them to let him go, smil thou they were still suspicious. While we were thus engaged, the children woke up and ate all the credy in their stockings. I spent the rest of the night between ministering to them and comforting Ethel, who feared that Mr. Fizzleron would bisme her for his sufferings. Yes, it was rather an ber for his sufferings. Yes, it was rather an exciting Christmas, but, as I said, we hope to be fully recovered from its effects in a week or two." ELISA ARMSTRONG.



man saw the ultimate victory over death and the triumph of the immortal over the mortal. a giornus star, and its light is still sluning upon the world to be a bencon amid the storm, to lead generations yet unborn to the humble manger sanctified by infinite love and compassion, and made holy by the birth

thrilled to the authem, for in it was heard my the thanksgiving of the slave, whose chains eye were to be made light by the love of the Christ, whose stripes were to be soothed by the hand that touched the leper and cleansed him of his foulness, whose shame was made glorious by a brotherhood with the carpenter's Son of Nazareth, who came maker's bil came in, but-" to preach the Gospel to the poor. Peace on earth," the Christmas bells to-day ring out the message that was flung to the winds the earth men come to bow down and offer their gifts of frankinesess and myrth, the incense of grateful and loving faith, at the called you. Odd, isn't it, that he has for feet of the infant Jesus win was "born King given me now that you weigh twice as of the Jews," but who reigns Lord of the much earth, proclaiming now, as in the hour when Houngh, I may weigh a few pounds more, He took upon Himself the likeness of man, but my hair is intact, and that is more that good will that endureth from genera-tion to generation, and that puties the shortcomings and failures of men with a bound-

What bring ye, who come to day to look prosperity will not change us!"

pon the holy mystery of the Christ-birth, "Never. Even though I am able to dress upon the holy mystery of the Christ-birth, as an offering acceptable to the Saviour of men; what treasure that shall not perish; what incense that shall be of goodly savor? ekling on their swords bid farewell to Personally, I expect tickets to Europe. home and trionds, seeking far away lands. Tickets to Europe, and I such a poor that they may slay the heathen who believe sailor that the sight of a marine in water the sepulcher in which His mortal part lay a few brief hours. Christ has revealed Himself as the Saviour of those who know Him not, the lover of peace and the nater of wars. "The captains and the kings depart," the stillness of death husbes the shouting of the multitude, the laurel withers upon the brow of the conqueror, the gold rusts in the coffer of the miser. What are honor, renown, riches, as a sacrifice to the King who had nowhere to lay His head, to the conqueror who vanquished death, to the Creator of the world and the fullness

bow down and worship Him, remember: "Still stands the ancient sacrifice; An numble and a contribe heart."

If Christ be truly born unto your souls, let your lives proclaim the message that the bells ring out this Christmas day. The adoration which strengthens your soul anew for the conflict of life should be like a glorious flower, shedding his perfume on the winds that sweep around the world, a puri-fying influence and a beauty which even the most careless eye can see. Gather up some wandering ray from the star shining over the manger, and bear it into the dark places earth, that it may light some soul in the midsight of despair, and lead it to the wandering tone of the angelic song, and re peat the strain above the pillow where Pain wards off the tender hand of Sleep, where Regret sounds the dirge over wasted hours, where Sorrow mosns in some haunted chamber in which the ghosts of lost days walk wailing for the sweet sin that left such deep and stinging wounds. He who bord the griefs of men yearns over the wandering sheep, and you who have seen His face, who have read the tender message of His love, who have trodden with Him the road from Bethlehem to Calvary, remember on this Christmas day that again He is born unto you and unto the world. You are the meaand good will that the Heavenly you are to interpret the meaning of God be come Man, you are to vindicate the martyr-dom that bought the highest good with in-carnate Virtue, for "unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." LOU V. CHAPIN.

A Fair Exchange.

Now doth the callow youth prepare
To show he madly loves.
By sending to his lady fair
A Christmas box of gloves.
But ah, releatless, cruel fate.
The maiden is not smitten.
And, as she must reciprocate.
She gives that youth the mitten.

She gives that youth the mitten.

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE.

How a Rejected Sultor Got Even with His Successful Rival.



has written that be is sending us a little for the tenth time. he could once be induced to visit our happy little home he would forget that \$1 - ah - treated him rather unkindly in eloping with you on

the very day which was to have seen me his the very day which was to have seen me his bride. To be sure, I left a note saying that I felt I could never have made him perfectly happy. Had he been a magnanimous person, he would have been satisfied with such a handsome apology—but he was not."
"Not at all," sighted her husband, "he was not inconsiderate. He—"

"However, a woman's tact has bridged the difficulty, as usual. I flatter myself that I did a clever and original thing in naming one of the twins for him. Who would be so



THE LID WAS OFF THE BOX AT LAST.

of a hope that should lift the lowliest man to the divine heights where he could look unafraid upon the face of his God.

"Peace on carth, good-will to men," sang the heavenly hosts, and the war-vexed world.

How he laughed when little Josiah rode on my back and playfully kicked me in the

And how merry he was when Ariadne spilled milk on my beat dress. What a pleasure it must have been to witness such felicity. To be sure, I am sorry that he hap-

maker's bil came in, but-"
"And I had rather that he had been out of earshot when you told me your honest opin-ion of a man who could not match embroidof night by the angel voices on the plains of Bethlehem, and from the uttermost ends of married sen years. However, this is mere

'And now he is sending us a Christmas box. I wonder what it contains? The chil-dren will be up at daylight to find out. Well,

as well as our own bired girl, I shall not insist that you write it Xmos, instead of Christmas, nor shall I call it appendicitis

not in Him, and rescue from impious hands | colors gives me seasickness! | Nonsense, he "A ranch-and I so afraid of cattle! How mean of you to think of such a thing. I'll never live on a ranch!"

"And I shall certainly not go to Europe!"
"I shall, and I'll never speak to you again.

Europe to Texas. But here is the express-man, and you'll see that I was right."
"That I was, dear. What a huge box!

I'm glad that he forgave us just at Christ-mas when he need not check his generosity, That trip to Europe—"
"Texas, you mean!" The lid was off the

box at last, and a silence fell upon them, as the gifts were opened. When the last one lay before them, they flung themselves despairingly into each other's arms. The villain said he had forgiven us!" she

'He can afford to-he is avenged!" he

For the box contained: One music box. which played only rag time; one drum, a life three horns, a toy piano, six packages of dynamite crackers, one Chinese gong, a toy pistol and a card, on which was written: "With Cousin Robert's best wishes for a very merry Christmas!"

A TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT.



"What's your little brother cryin' for?" "He hung up his stockin' last night and only Claus brought him a little brother, but he wanted a drum!"-Ladio